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Double Take

Research Alert

Mobile Learning: A Genie on the Loose

A new report, *Learning in the 21st Century: Mobile Devices + Social Media = Personalized Learning*, presents an updated perspective on the role of mobile devices in K–12 education and on educators' changing views on mobile learning. Here are some findings:

- When combined with social media and wireless connectivity, mobile devices and mobile computers—that is, smartphones, tablets, and laptops—are increasingly being seen as enablers of more personalized learning opportunities. This is due to the high adoption rate of mobile devices, not just among students, but also among teachers, administrators, and parents.
- Incorporating student-owned devices within classroom instruction is quickly becoming a viable solution for schools and districts, in light of current fiscal problems in schools that make 1:1 computing environments burdensome and administrators' growing realization of the potential of these devices.
- Increasing numbers of parents now support mobile learning. Two-thirds of parents of school-age children have a smartphone. When asked whether they would buy their child a mobile device if it was allowed in school, almost two-thirds said yes. Interestingly, these numbers reflect the views not just of parents in suburban schools, but also of those in urban, rural, and Title I environments.
- The biggest challenge to expanding mobile learning is changing teacher practice. Teachers' main concerns are that students will be distracted from their work or use the devices to cheat. One-quarter of the teachers noted that they lacked knowledge about how to integrate the devices into instruction and that their curriculum doesn't support mobile device use.

"The genie cannot be put back in the bottle," the report notes (p. 10). Despite the challenges around digital equity, infrastructure, and teacher training, there's increasing agreement among stakeholders that schools need to find ways to optimize mobile learning.

Authored by Project Tomorrow and Blackboard, *Learning in the 21st century: Mobile Devices + Social Media = Personalized Learning* is available at www.blackboard.com/resources/markets/k-12/collateral/project-tomorrow/K12_Prjct-Tmrw_Mbl-Rpt_2012.pdf.

Numbers of Note

77 The percentage of advanced placement and National Writing Project teachers who say that the Internet and digital search tools have had a "mostly positive impact" on their students' research.

87 The percentage of these teachers who say that these technologies are creating an "easily distracted generation with short attention spans."

World Spin

Staying Afloat with Technology

In Bangladesh, where water seems more prevalent than land and monsoon flooding regularly occurs, solar-powered floating schools are bringing learning and technology to the rural poor. The boats, complete with computers and high-speed Internet, bring schooling to students who would otherwise not be able to attend school. The boats have solar-powered lamps, which enable both students and their families to study or work at night, a rare activity in an area that lacks electricity. The floating schools also offer education opportunities to women and girls, who are frequently denied access to traditional schooling.

Relevant Reads

***Getting Smart: How Digital Learning Is Changing the World* by Tom Vander Ark (Jossey-Bass, 2012)**

Major shifts affecting education have taken place over the last decade, writes Vander Ark. Families and students are taking back responsibility for education, social networks are augmenting the classroom as the dominant organizing unit of learning, and learning is taking place anytime and anywhere. These shifts demand that schools embrace a new model of education that blends online and on-site learning.

"A scary brave new world or just a great new way to live? The question is academic because, of course, we aren't going to go back. But for those who fear that giving over education to this world means relinquishing our last hold on quality and the focused brain, it is important to challenge the assumption that focus, deep learning, and even social connections depend on students spending six hours at a desk in school." (p. 32)

Online Only

Assess Your Tech Integration

Available from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), the [ISTE Classroom Observation Tool](#) helps users assess the quality of technology integration in school settings. The free tool provides a rubric that enables classroom observers to record various aspects of tech integration, including the teacher's role during the observed class period (such as lecturing or facilitating) and the activities learners are engaged in (such as classroom discussions or watching presentations). Observers also record the kinds of technologies used, selecting from a list of 28 tools (calculators, interactive whiteboards, video cameras, and so on). The viewer judges whether the technology is essential to the lesson or "not needed"—and whether the activities help students meet ISTE's standards for the skills students will need to thrive in a digital world.

PageTurner

What do we do when the web, which has upended just about every other traditional institution, sets its sights squarely on schooling?

—[Will Richardson, p. 10](#)

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